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## DRAWN FROM THE LIFE.

HUNTING EXTRAORDINARY—A PERSONAL  
REMINISCENCE.

It was my misfortune in early life to have to go a-hunting three days a week. My father kept a pack of harriers (or, as the *Times* alone correctly spells it, hariers), and I was bound in filial duty to perform this penance. I had a pony of my own, called *Lightfoot*, and it was only proper that I should make use of him. My brothers were all sportsmen—or sportsboys—and even my mother was famous as a horsewoman, and especially gifted with an eye for seeing hares sitting. Forty hares might have sat under *Lightfoot's* nose; and their cunningly contrived 'forms,' with that sloping roof of grass above them, would have hidden them all from me; but my maternal parent never missed one. Often and often would her uplifted hand call the attention of her degenerate son, and at a nod from her I would gallop off to the huntsman, and tell him I knew where poor puss was in biding. But I never was able to deceive that man.

'You mean your mamma knows, Master Jemmy,' he used to say; and then he would chuckle in the brutal manner so characteristic of his profession, and with a 'Come up, will you!' addressed to his old roan, lead the dogs to their victim. I see him now 'tooting' away on that battered horn of his, while his horse's hoofs cast up the wet soil of the turnip-field behind him, and very often into my eye.

It is impossible that every boy can take delight in hunting, and be so devoted to horses and dogs as they pretend to be. Of course, many are honest enough in this predilection; but because it is un-English not to like such things, a good many of them fall into another un-English habit, and tell lies about the matter. I was a sharp boy, but I can't believe I was the only sensible one that ever was. As we grow up, there are many amusements about which everybody is more or less of a hypocrite. It is permitted to profess an attachment beyond what is actually felt for the legitimate drama, for 'a little

music after dinner,' for the sermons of a popular preacher, and for trifles: but in early life, Hypocrisy is surely to be deprecated. Why, then, is the Youth of this country compelled by public opinion to affect an interest in horses and dogs, which may not be felt, and in some cases may be even repugnant? For my part, I greatly preferred cats. At nine years of age I was a student, so far as exciting works of fiction were concerned, and I found relaxation in teaching the nursemaid cabbage.

Why, at least in so unimportant a matter as recreation, should not everybody be permitted to follow his own line? It was surely hard that, on account of my simple and inexpensive tastes, I was stigmatised in the family circle as Molly. It was a marvel that this inconsiderate treatment, combined with the private opinion which I could not help entertaining of my friends and neighbours and their tastes, did not make me a Cynic.

Imagine a dark day in late November, half-fog, half-mizzle, and evidently designed for the perusal of the *Last of the Mohicans* over the school-room fire, or a quiet little rubber with pretty Susan, while the younger children took their peaceful morning's sleep around us—imagine, I say, on a day like that, having to mount *Lightfoot*, and trot through the damp woods or over the wet turnips in search of a poor animal, whom Nature (and, I may add, good sense) had taught to lie snug and warm at home in her form. She was not easy to find, even by my accomplished mother, and our situation in the meantime was melancholy in the extreme. All soon felt cold and dreary, and I, for my part, having a rapid digestion, was very quickly hungry. I used to take an immense piece of cake with me, so large that it seemed (at first) that I could never get through it, and some of it I would share with the young puppies. But this was objected to. In spite of their pretended fondness for dogs, I never saw one of my people give them a crumb, and they even found fault with me for my humanity. I kept it to myself, of course, for the dogs' as well as my own sake; but there were one or two of the younger hounds who always preferred hanging

about in my neighbourhood to poking among the wet turnip leaves after a creature that was invariably caught, if it was caught at all, by their seniors. When I say 'invariably,' there was one exception. *Grudgeon*—a wise dog, who would have been a turnspit, if he had had his choice—and I were once in a solitary spot together, and found a hare all by ourselves. I forget the technical term of reproach for his conduct, but *Grudgeon* snapped her up in her form, and ate her, body and bones and fur and all. It is my belief that all those dogs were half-starved, but I must confess that *Grudgeon* had acquired his name from an exceptionally healthy appetite.

When the toad has swallowed the duck's egg in Mr Dumaunier's never-to-be-forgotten picture, it is with a very distended appearance that he replies to the agitated and inquiring mother: 'How should I know?' and this was just poor *Grudgeon's* case after he had bolted that hare, which was within an inch or two as large as himself. He sat down and whined in my face with a look of pain and penitence which it was pitiful to witness. It was evident he wished, too late, that he had shared that gorgeous banquet with another. I did my best for him, but I was young and inexperienced. I rode up to my eldest brother, and asked whether I had not better take poor *Grudgeon* home, because I thought he was—well, in an interesting situation. Of course I was wrong, in every way; and I got no credit, not even from *Grudgeon*, who, I verily believe, imagined that I had told upon him, and got him his beating, for after that time he never hung about me as before, with an eye to lunch.

Well, I say, until the hare was found all was despondency: when she was started, there was madness, a helter-skelter of ten minutes, during which I almost always lost my hat. I never fell off *Lightfoot*, unless I wanted to do so; but often and often I would guide him away, despite his efforts, from the maddening crowd, and in a solitary spot dismount, and put clover in my hair, to shew that I had been pitched off, and then ride home, with a good excuse, to the *Mohicans* and Susan. It was Duplicity, I own, but she is the natural (if not the legitimate) daughter of Oppression; and was not I oppressed? It was indeed attempted to shew that I ought to be thankful to my tyrants, to welcome the whip and the chain—that is, the hunting whip and the curb-chain. 'There is many a boy of your age, sir,' urged my father, 'who would jump at a pony such as *Lightfoot*, and hail your three days a week with my harriers as the highest joy.' 'Very good, papa,' said I cheerfully; 'give *Lightfoot* to some poor boy, and make him happy.'

At which very reasonable and benevolent reply, my father was exceedingly irritated, and muttered something to mamma which implied a doubt of my parentage, and made her angry. He couldn't believe I was his own son, it seemed, because I didn't like 'thistle-whipping.' If I had been an impertinent boy, I could have made use of that sarcasm, for I knew very well what hare-hunters are thought of by fox-hunters. Perhaps stag-hunters in their turn have some depreciatory epithet for the infatuated followers of Reynard. The littlenesses and jealousies of Sporting folks are beyond belief.

Sometimes, by-the-bye, as a great treat, we boys went out with the fox-hounds, which was a much more serious matter to me than going with papa's

pack, and, as it were, in the family way. The meets were much farther off, and the fox would generally take an opposite direction from home and Susan. They might call me Molly; but nothing could exceed the effeminate vanity which distinguished my elder brothers upon such great occasions; they were never tired of looking at themselves in their highly polished top-boots; and they took as great delight in their spotless cords as any girl in her first ball-dress. They did not sport scarlet (though they wanted to do so above everything); but my father exhibited a weakness, exactly the reverse of theirs, for wearing the oldest and shabbiest red coat, with the tails looking—though, as a general rule, I doubt whether fox-hunters use pens—as if he had wiped his pen on them.

Those meets, indeed, struck me, even as a boy, as a ludicrous exhibition of dandyism and conceit; young gentlemen in velvet caps riding their hacks, though it might be but two miles, to cover, and exchanging them for their glossy hunters; and ladies in carriages smiling upon them, and affecting the most absorbing interest in their bays and browns, not without an eye for becoming that sort of gray mare themselves which goes by the name of 'the better horse.' Of course folks may dress in red if they please, and spend a thousand a year apiece in riding after a useless beast, whose evil smell is its only recommendation, and these remarks would never have been penned, if I had not been, so to speak, dragged out to swell their pageant. But as it was, my indifference to such a spectacle became in time contempt. It was impossible that I could retain my respect for 'the county,' or even the chairman of quarter-sessions, when I saw them under such circumstances as these. I often think, when I read the radical papers, that certain editors in embryo may have been treated in their youth as I was, and hence their bitterness against the unpaid magistracy. I picture one, in particular, mounted upon a donkey, following, or attempting to follow, the X. Y. Z., as that famous pack ran round and round in their courses. Foxes almost always run in a circle, and, in my opinion, a vicious one.

Dear me, what discomforts I suffered in those days; partly from vexation, and partly from hunger (for we did not get home till I don't know what time), I used to eat the fingers of my gloves. I had sufficient good taste, however, to affect to share in the pleasure of these good people, and I remember the high-sheriff coming up to me on one occasion, and after a favourable criticism upon *Lightfoot* (for these folks always put the cart—I mean the horse before the man), saying: 'Well, young gentleman, this is your third season with us, is it not? You seem to enjoy life as much as most people.' He was a good-natured man, and we were all sorry when he dashed out his—I mean broke his neck at a stone wall.

I never took a jump myself—not if I knew it; but once *Lightfoot* took me in and out of a sheep-fold, over the hurdles. 'How well your young un sticks his horse,' observed one who witnessed this involuntary feat to my father; and he was so pleased, that he bought me a new hunting-whip, which, by-the-bye, I could never crack, though I often got the thong round my neck and the lash in my eyes. Of course my dear father meant everything that was kind, but I could never forgive him having *Lightfoot* clipped. They laughed at

me when I expressed my fears that he would catch cold ; but, in reality, my apprehension was, that they would cut his mane, which was of the utmost consequence to me to take hold of at a crisis. I should never have got in and out of that sheepfold but for *Lightfoot's* mane ; and when this cruel edict was put in force, I had to remain indoors—from indisposition—until his mane grew long again. Nothing would have induced me—no, not all Scott's novels bound in morocco—to go out hunting on a horse with a clipped mane (such as they wear in the Elgin Marbles), unless I had been tied on like Mazeppa. The pommel, as an element of adhesiveness, is greatly overrated, though, of course, a drowning man will cling to a straw.

It is not my habit, however, thus to dwell upon my own wrongs, and I have only done so as a fitting introduction to the circumstance which has given the title of 'Hunting Extraordinary' to this unpretending paper. There was one occasion on which I thoroughly enjoyed a day with my father's pack. We had been led rather farther afield than usual, and the family, consisting of my mother and two brothers, my father, the Huntsman and Whip, were returning home, after what they called an indifferent day's sport ; only one mad scurry of ten minutes. The 'field' had melted away, and we were jogging along a lonely lane, all, with one exception, rather disconsolate and crest-fallen, when suddenly poor puss started up from a ditch in the roadside, and Babel and Bedlam at once broke loose together. I had got in my studies to somewhere in the fifth volume of the *Mysteries of Udolpho*, and was endeavouring to evolve the dénouement out of my own head, when *Lightfoot* suddenly plunged forward in pursuit, and dissipated my dreams. Of course I lost my hat ; but if I had stopped for it, and was left behind, I might also have lost my way, for we were in an utterly strange country, and the hare, being fresh, was inclined to shew us a good deal of it. She presently led us by a bare cottage, on the skirts of a large coppice, or spinny, at the door of which there stood a woman, wringing her hands and weeping bitterly. The hunt, of course, went on ; human misery is not to be considered, where the chase is concerned ; but my quick ear was always open to tale of woe, and, besides, this poor woman would probably direct me home by a much shorter route than a mad March—no, January hare was likely to take me. So I pulled up *Lightfoot* by a superhuman effort, and inquired What was the matter.

'Oh, good young gentleman,' cried the widow, for such her cap and threadbare but decent suit of mourning announced her to be, 'I have just been robbed of all that I have in the world by a villain. He has taken everything worth having out of my little cottage, and has run away into yonder wood.' Now, an incident of this sort was worth more to me than all the hares in the world. My mind at once recurred to Rudolfo of the Redhand, the Bandit of the Black Forest, and how he was hunted down and slain by the heroic young villager of St Goar and his faithful retriever.

'Upon my faith and honour as a kni—I mean as a gentleman,' cried I, 'you shall be avenged ;' and with that I dashed the rowels—but no, I was much too sagacious to wear spurs ; I laid my hunting-whip about *Lightfoot* in a manner that must have astonished him beyond all measure, and flew

after the hare-hunters like a fireman who sees flame about my Lord's mansion, and knows that whether he is really wanted, or it is only illuminations, he will get well paid for making his engine speed. 'The family' rode well, however, and it is doubtful whether I should have caught them up, had it not been for that most delightful of hunting incidents called a check, which happened to have just occurred ; they had overrun the poor creature, I believe, and the huntsman was about to make a cast—an expression borrowed from the art of statuary—as I galloped up.

'Papa,' cried I, 'there's a robber in the wood, and you must catch him ;' for, being a magistrate, I knew he would not dare neglect the interests of justice for the excitement of the chase ; nor, indeed, did he evince any wish to do so. We all galloped back to the widow, and heard her story. The villain, she said, had beaten her cruelly, and run off with a bundle, in which he had rolled her clock, her teaspoons, her only pillow, and even her wedding-ring. My father had a great objection to villains, grudging me even the few biographies of them which I possessed, on the ground that they should be neither seen nor heard of, and took up the poor woman's cause with the utmost enthusiasm. He stationed mamma, my brothers, and myself on the skirts of the wood, while the dogs with himself and the two men went in to draw the place, exactly as if they were after their natural quarry. 'As for you, Master Jem,' said he, 'don't go "heading" the wretch, as you did the fox the other day, to the eternal disgrace of your family ; but if you see him, let him get well out before you give the view holloa.'

I never was so excited in my life, nor certainly so happy since I had been on horseback ; and I willingly promised obedience. The poor widow locked her door, for fear the creature should take to earth in that direction, and, retiring up-stairs, kept watch at her bedroom window. It was a pity that the field had left us, as we were obliged to place ourselves at such a great distance from one another, but we all determined not to miss the gentleman. It was my good fortune first to catch sight of him. The hounds had been in the cover about five minutes, and got about half through it, when the game was started so near to *Lightfoot* and myself that we both started too. I think I see him now. He was a big burly man, with a billycock hat slouched over his evil face, and with a large blue bundle slung over his shoulder. Seeing only a boy on a pony, he took no notice of us beyond giving us a wicked scowl ; and in accordance with my instructions, I let him run off across the field for about fifty yards, and then I gave the view holloa with a will. Instantly the villain turned, and made at us, probably in the hope of getting back to the wood, but, as I imagined, in order to wreak his vengeance with clasp-knife and bludgeon. For the second time that day did *Lightfoot* feel the unaccustomed whip-lash, and off I galloped to my 'supports.' Neither mamma nor the boys would have been much good against so formidable a ruffian ; but just as he reached the edge of the spinny my father and the huntsman sprang out of it, on horseback, and Rudolfo surrendered himself, without conditions. I remember, as though it were yesterday, his wrist being tied to the thong of the huntsman's whip, and thus secured, his sullenly accompanying us to the little country town, to be placed in durance ; while

the dogs sniffed about his heels (and especially *Grudgeon*), as though they had been robbed of a perquisite, and would have enjoyed a change of diet exceedingly.

That was the only day's hunting which I ever really enjoyed, and it was almost the last; for very soon afterwards, it fortunately happened that we became reduced in our circumstances, and those family harriers were 'put down.'

### THE BULGARIAN RAYAHs.

BULGARIA may be reached from England in six days; but it is nevertheless a country so little known, that almost any information beyond the fact of its existence, and the vague notions concerning it which people derived somehow, from somewhere, at the time of the Crimean War, has at least the interest of novelty. Two gentlemen,\* who have resided for three years among the hills of the Balkans, where they have become intimately acquainted with the Bulgarian Rayahs, have combined, in a jointly-written book, their common experiences; and it is undeniable that these are calculated to create some surprise, and to upset the vague notions already alluded to, which comprise a belief in the patient virtues of the Christian, and the ferocity of the Mussulman populations. The writers, perfectly understanding the severity and unpleasantness of the shock which they are about to administer to British prejudice and preconceived opinion, are careful to advance their claims to credibility. Their stay in the country has thrown them into close (and, in most cases, very pleasant) relations with the Mussulman populations—Turks, Tartars, Circassians, and Arnauts. Not requiring the aid of an interpreter, and trusting to their guns as escort, they have had opportunities of hearing the unvarnished truth from Mussulman and Christian, such as would scarcely fall to the lot of a traveller accompanied by a dragoman or an escort of soldiers. They arrived in Bulgaria, and started on their mission of investigation, with strong prejudices in favour of oriental Christianity and its professors; and anything more complete than their conversion, it would be difficult to find in the annals of change of opinion.

The Bulgarian Rayahs are much more amusing to read about than to live amongst. It is to be hoped there are not many races, outside the circle of the acquaintance of the noble army of African explorers, so utterly good for nothing, so swinishly ignorant, and so preposterously self-sufficient as the Christian Bulgarians, who are complacently supposed by some persons in England to be the salt of that part of the earth. There is not much variety in the aspect of their villages; the description of one will stand for all. 'A sandy ravine sloping down to the Lake of Varna between ranges of low hills, covered with the remains of once magnificent forests; some three-score of mud houses, or

rather huts, each surrounded by irregularly shaped enclosures of hurdle-work in every stage of dilapidation; two or three fountains; many wild cherry, plum, apple, and pear trees; buffaloes, pigs, and innumerable cur-dogs of every size, wandering about listlessly in search of food.' Such, making the necessary allowance for difference of position, is the aspect of every Rayah village in the Bulgarian Balkan. The main road is the resort of such of the village pigs as are not out on the pasture-land, and of the disgusting but useful scavenger dogs. The huts are surrounded by crazy fences, which also enclose in each case a clumsy structure 'resembling a child's Noah's Ark, immensely magnified, and upon raised wooden legs.' This is the granary, in which the Bulgarian peasant stores a small quantity of wheat or Indian corn, reserved for the use of his family. A rude plough, unaltered in form since the earliest days of agriculture; some equally primitive tools; a heap of logs for firewood; a ladder; an *araba*, or springless cart; a few melancholy turkeys; and a brood of famished chickens, are invariable appendages of every house. Each village boasts two or three public-houses, or *bakals*, in front of which the men sit cross-legged on the ground, drinking, smoking, and gossiping. The following is a droll description of a very common incident in these neighbourly gatherings: 'As the drugged wine produces its effect, a dispute arises, and they start to their feet, abusing one another with all the facile eloquence of Slavonic vituperation, and draw their knives with more than Italian gesticulation. The Italian *coltellata* is, however, rarely given in these public quarrels; for woman, the universal peace-maker, appears upon the scene, armed with persuasive words and a thick stick. But though her verbal or manual arguments may stay the impending strife, she shares the proverbial fate of "those who in quarrels interpose;" for wives are as soundly thrashed in Bulgaria as in Lancashire or Clerkenwell. There is another reason which prevents these drunken quarrels from ending in bloodshed upon the spot: the Rayah, instead of trusting his cause to the *jugement de Dieu*, as manifested in a duel with knives, prefers to stab his adversary at an advantage, or to adopt the more silent vengeance of poison, one always safe in a country where the police, seldom seen outside the walls of the town, is looked upon by the Christian as his natural enemy, and therefore rarely appealed to, and where *post-mortem* examinations are unknown.'

A general air of desolation pervades these wretched villages in the daytime; but in the evening the men return from the forest, and the oxen, goats, sheep, and pigs arrive from the pastures. This sounds pretty and pastoral, but it is in reality dreary and savage, for the men are little above the beasts they drive in intellectual faculties, and not nearly so harmless. The picture of domestic life is singularly uninviting; and the huts in which it passes away are extremely wretched, and, even among those of the wealthier peasantry, very small, never consisting of more than three rooms, of which two are bedrooms, entirely destitute of furniture, which serve as sleeping-apartments for the junior members of the family, no separation of the sexes being considered necessary. 'Bedsteads,' says the author, 'are

\* *A Residence in Bulgaria, or Notes on the Resources and Administration of Turkey, &c.* By S. G. St Clair, late Captain 1st Fusiliers, and Charles A. Brophy. London: John Murray.



unknown; a mat is placed upon the floor, the peasant thrusts his sheep-skin cap over his eyes, makes the Greek sign of the cross, covers himself up with a rug or two, and goes to sleep without further preparation.' A peculiar gloom is imparted to the Bulgarian villages by the absence of windows, of which the houses are entirely destitute; the only channels of light and ventilation being the large chimney, and the chinks and crannies of the ill-joined door. The reason assigned for this is, the universal dread of brigands, who might come at night and fire through the windows (if they existed) at the sleeping peasants, to whom the simple expedient of using strong wooden shutters, such as they may see in any Turkish village, has never occurred. The authors conclude their repulsive account of these people's domestic arrangements by a passage which places them in strong and unfavourable contrast with the cleanly and civilised Turkish peasantry. 'The atmosphere produced by these habits, and the presence of a dozen people who do not take off their under-clothing four times during the year, and who are, moreover, redolent of garlic and raki, is not agreeable to the stranger in Bulgaria; for the Rayah, like the negro, diffuses around him a peculiar aromatic odour, by no means Sabæan, which makes one feel inclined to apply to the whole race Dante's description of Geryon: 'Ecco colei che tutto il mondo appuzza'; more particularly as this aroma extends itself in some subtle manner even to the cookery, so that it is easy for any one who has eaten food with both Christian and Mussulman to distinguish, both by taste and smell, the virtuous of the one creed from those of the other.'

The ingenuous traveller, cherishing the traditions of eastern hospitality, has them rudely dispelled by the avarice, rapacity, and exorbitant cheating of the Rayahs, and, if he went no further than their villages, would be likely to regard them as myths indeed. But let him extend his exploration to a Turkish village, and he will find that the mere fact of his being a stranger insures him food, shelter, and a hearty welcome. A Mussulman may not receive travellers into the sacred precinct of his own house, but in every village there is a cottage built for their reception, and thither you will be directed. Arrived there, 'you enter a little room, kept scrupulously clean, and furnished with matting and a few cushions; shortly after, some one comes in with coffee and the apparatus for making it, salutes you, and in a minute or two offers you a tiny cup of coffee, such as few but Turks, of the country, can make. Then other villagers come in, each with an offering of bread, cheese, cream, butter-milk, lentils, honey, eggs—in short, to use their own words, as they excuse the poverty of the meal, "what God has given to them." No questions are asked until you have eaten and are satisfied, and are then put in a tone far different from the Prussian-frontier manner of the Bulgarians. No one who has mixed with the true Turks—those of the provinces, uncontaminated by a sojourn at *Peri* or *Paris*—can help being struck with their innate tact, refinement, and *gentlemanliness*. In the morning, you are offered a frugal breakfast, and of course coffee; when you leave, no payment will be asked for; and if you offer money in return for the kindness you have received, you will insult your entertainers: the only way of compensating them is to give some

small sum towards the maintenance of the mosque or the school, and even this may not be accepted if it be given undisguisedly as payment for hospitality.' The authors think it fair to state that, though, in an extensive series of rambles among the villages of Bulgaria, they have *never* found a Mussulman who would accept payment from his guests for anything his house afforded—they have met with but one instance of a Christian who at first refused money, but even he finally took it without much pressing.

As this contrast between Mussulman and Christian is frequently and forcibly put, and as it extends to everything in the constitution of their lives—to their morals as much as to their manners—as the former are held up to admiration for their enlightenment and civilisation, and the latter are represented as incredibly degraded, it is necessary, in order to avoid imputing to the authors an invidious preference for the Mohammedan faith, to examine what the so-called Christianity of these people really is. The fairest evidence on this subject is that supplied by their own formularies, from which it appears that all the superstitions of the western religions have been tacked on to the ancient paganism of the Bulgarians, and that the moral influence of the combination is of an excessively degrading kind. The clergy of the orthodox Greek Church are very ignorant, and entirely indifferent in matters appertaining to religion, and they openly encourage the ignorance of their flocks. For instance, the authors adduce this: 'When the Papas finds his prayer to St John the Baptist for rain utterly ineffectual, whilst the spells of the village witch (the crudest forms of sorcery prevail among these people) are followed by a plentiful shower, which revives the drooping cabbages, he, being without any belief in the religion which he professes, and yet feeling the necessity of believing in *something*, comes to the conclusion, that certain occult forces are really the appanage of the sorceress, and instead of opposing himself to the powers of darkness, he thinks it better to make a compact of mutual aid and toleration. So, if the Papas's fields suffer from drought, or his wife or children are ill, he sends for the village witch, who performs certain incantations, addressed to the Spirit of Evil, for the benefit of the weather or the sick people, and who carries out her part of the treaty by paying the Papas's exactions, and taking her own infant to be sprinkled with holy water every month.' The practical religion, constructed of the old Slavonic Pantheism, which reigns supreme, combined with the outward observances of the Greek Church, is of the most extraordinary kind. Their festivals are utterly heathen. Thus, on All Souls' Day, the women go from house to house with lighted candles, in order 'that the souls of the dead may have good appetites, and be well fed in the place where they are.' There is no doubt that their only idea of a condition of life after the death of the body is entirely material, and they adhere pertinaciously to the horrid superstition of the vampire, which takes various forms, some ludicrous, and all disgusting. Then there is the Feast of Serpents, the Feast of old Mother March, and a horrid custom of ushering in Lent by catching all the village dogs, and beating them, to prevent their going mad during the year. On the Feast of the Panagia, lambs are sacrificed, in order that the children of

the house may enjoy good health throughout the year. On the Feast of St Demetrius, lighted candles are placed in the stables and the place where firewood is chopped, to prevent evil spirits entering into the domestic animals. The confession of a Bulgarian peasant is not an easy matter, for he has to make a mental review of the commands of the clergy, of which one of the latest is, that he must not give alms to a gipsy or an 'infidel.' But the most convincing testimony to the degraded condition in which the Bulgarian conscience is kept, is contained in the following authentic catalogue of 'sins,' which is a popular catechism. It is a sin: '1. To give a child a spoon to play with. 2. To give away or sell a loaf of bread without breaking a piece from it. 3. Not to fumigate with incense the flour when it is brought from the mill (particularly if the mill be kept by a Turk), in order to prevent the devil entering into it. 4. To wash a child before he has come to the canonical age of reason—that is to say, seven years. 5. To sell flour before making a loaf from it. 6. To clean a stable, sell milk, or fetch water from the fountain after dark. 7. To allow a dog to sleep on the roof of the house, as this gravely imperils the soul of any defunct member of the family. 8. Not to throw some water out of every bucket brought from the fountain, as some elementary spirit might otherwise be floating on the surface of the water, and, not being thrown out, take up his abode in the house, or enter into the body of any one who drank from the vessel. Finally, it is a sin to fail in the observance of any of the hundred superstitious practices approved or tolerated by the Papas.' From which it is sufficiently manifest that a pious Rayah cannot have an easy time of it in this world, at all events. They have not the slightest idea of moral responsibility, or even self-respect; they are as abjectly afraid of evil spirits as any African tribe; and their superstitions, entirely devoid of any poetical element, are as gross as those of the Abyssinians, which indeed they resemble in certain unmentionable respects. The Bulgarian vampire is not in the least like the creation of romancers and dramatists, but a creation of fancy as coarse and foul as it is morbid. Here is an account of an occurrence which took place in the village where the authors resided. 'Thirty years since, a stranger arrived, established himself, and married a wife, with whom he lived on very good terms, she making but one complaint—that her husband absented himself from the conjugal roof every night, and all night. It was soon remarked, that although scavengers were and are utterly unknown in Bulgaria, a great deal of scavenger's work was done at night by some unseen being, and that the dead horses and buffaloes which lay about the streets were devoured by invisible teeth, much to the prejudice of the village dogs; then the mysterious mouth drained the blood of all cattle that happened to be in any way sickly. These occurrences, and the testimony of the wife, caused the stranger to be suspected of vampirism: he was examined, found to have only one nostril, and, upon this irrefragable evidence, was condemned to death. In executing this sentence, our villagers did not think it necessary to send for the priest to confess themselves, or to take consecrated halters or daggers; they just tied their man hand and foot, lit a big fire of wait-a-bit thorns, and burned him alive.' A faith in fountain spirits is universal; and the

peasantry are possessed with an invincible belief in the existence of buried treasure, and also with an insatiable desire for finding it, which alone gives them courage to go out after nightfall. The authors have known many who, though they would not do two hours' work to earn a shilling, or to improve their fields, would dig for three or four consecutive nights, with their hair standing on end, and the cold sweat of terror on their brows, in the hope of finding some treasure supposed to have been buried by Alexander the Great. In all the customs of the Bulgarians, there is a monotonous ignorance and degradation; the witch presides at every ceremony; the sole popular notion of enjoyment consists in eating and drinking; the social position of women is very degraded; and the marriage and funeral customs are ludicrously like those prevalent in Africa. Sir Samuel Baker can hardly present his readers with a more absurd and pitiable picture than this: 'At the moment of death, all pots, pans, kettles, and other utensils are turned upside down, in order to prevent the soul of the departed taking refuge in one of them, and therefrom commencing a system of annoyance against the family; candles or tapers are lit around the body, and the head is dressed with flowers; the body is dressed in its best clothes, and the family run outside and scream a lamentation to the following effect:

O Tanaz! Boze! Boze!  
 Who will cut wood for us now?  
 Who will kill the sheep?  
 Who will take care of the poor buffaloes?  
 Who will carry the corn to the mill?  
 Who will beat us as you used to do?  
 O Tanaz!

Strike and howl.

As the dead are buried before their bodies are cold, it is presumable that premature burial is not uncommon; indeed, the authors knew that it occurred in two instances, and were told of another in which the buried man contrived to escape from his shallow grave, and returning home, gave his wife a tremendous beating, in acknowledgment of her precipitation in getting rid of him.

The political, commercial, and labour systems in this most unattractive country, are execrably bad, for very different reasons than those usually supposed. The Rayahs have too much time, too much liberty, too much land. They abuse all these gifts, having no idea or ambition beyond a life of sluggish idleness; and they are, together with their priests—who rule them in all actual and social respects—sunken in apathetic, contented ignorance. The resources of the country are both shamefully wasted and undeveloped; the farming operations are deplorably insufficient; but little hay is made; turnips are utterly unknown; and the authors believe that if snow were to lie on the ground for two consecutive months, there would probably not be fifty cattle or sheep left alive in the whole of Bulgaria. European Turkey occupies a fifth of the wheat-producing surface of Europe, but thanks to the idleness of the Rayah, upon whom the eastern grain-trade is chiefly dependent, it produces less than one-third of the amount of grain which should be grown upon it—a fact which justifies the authors' denunciation of the interesting Christian of the East as not only a social good-for-nothing, but as an active instrument of evil to Europe.

The three years' experience of Bulgaria detailed in this volume, cannot fail to convince the reader that the Christians of the East need a great deal of Christianising.

### WASTE NOT!

ONE of the blessings of modern science presents itself in the form of economy, frugality, utilisation. Things which were formerly thrown away as waste are now applied to man's purposes, to an extent far beyond our general supposition. Dr Lyon Playfair and Mr P. L. Simmonds have frequently drawn attention to this subject, chiefly in illustration of the wonders of chemistry. Mr Simmonds has recently collected a new budget of instances, which he has brought under the notice of the Society of Arts.

Before touching on these, let us refresh the reader's memory by a summary of results already recorded. Beautiful perfumes are produced from substances not merely trivial, but in some cases fetid and repulsive. Fusel oil, putrid cheese, gas-tar, and the drainage of cow-houses, are thus transformed; the result is a triumph of chemistry; but it is commercially shabby and unfair to call perfumes thus obtained by such delightful names as 'oil of pears,' 'oil of apples,' 'oil of pine-apples,' 'oil of grapes,' 'oil of cognac,' 'oil of bitter almonds,' 'eau de millefleurs.' Blue dyes are made from scraps of tin, old woollen rags, and the parings of horses' hoofs. Old iron hoops are employed in ink-making; bones as a source of phosphorus for tipping Congreve matches; the dregs of port wine for making Seidlitz powders; the washings of coal-tar for producing a flavouring condiment for *blanc-mange*. Old woollen rags are the foundation of the prosperity of Dewsbury and Batley in Yorkshire: these musty, fusty, dusty, frouzy fragments being ground up into shoddy and mungo. Other relics of old woollen garments are made to yield flock for wall-paper, padding for mattresses, and Prussian-blue for the colour-makers. Chemicals are employed to destroy the cotton fibres in old worn-out balzarines, Orleans, coburgs, and other mixed fabrics for ladies' dresses, and to liberate the woollen or worsted fibres for a new career of usefulness. Woollen rags, when even the shoddy-maker will have nothing to do with them, are choice materials for the farmer as manure. That bones are used for knife-handles we know very well; but it appears they are also used for bone-black by colour and varnish makers, for size by dyers and cloth-finishers, and for manure by farmers. Horns and hoofs are a very magazine of useful products in the hands of the scientific chemist. Whalebone cuttings yield Prussian-blue; dogs' fat is (shamefully) made into sham cod-liver oil; wool-scourers' waste and washings reappear as beautiful stearine candles; bullocks' blood is used in refining sugar, in making animal charcoal, and in Turkey-red dyeing; ox-gall or bile is used by wool-scourers and by colour-makers; fishes' eyes are used for buds in artificial flowers; bladders and intestines are made into air-tight coverings and into musical strings; all the odds and ends of leather and parchment dressing are grist to the glue-maker; calves' and sheep's feet yield an oil which is doctored up most fragrantly by the perfumer; stinking fish is always welcome as manure to the farmer; and a brown dye is extracted from those

small bedroom acquaintances whom few of us like to talk about, and none like to see or to feel. At least fifty thousand tons of cotton-waste, the residue and sweepings of the mills, are annually utilised, by being worked up into coarse sheeting, bed-covers, papier-mâché, and the commonest kinds of printing-paper. Sea-weed is used as a material for paper, as a lining material for ceilings and walls, and as a source whence the chemist can obtain iodine. Various kinds of seed, when the oil has been squeezed out of them, are useful cattle-fatteners as oil-cake. Grape husks yield a beautiful black for choice kinds of ink; raisin stalks constitute a capital clarifying agent for vinegar; bran or corn refuse is valuable in tanning, calico-printing, and tin-plate making; brewers' and distillers' grains are fattening food for cattle. Bread-rasps are in France sometimes used as a substitute for coffee, and as a tooth-powder. Tan-pit refuse is valuable for the gardener's hothouse. Damaged potatoes, and rice and grain, are made to yield starch. Ground horse-chestnuts are not unknown to the makers of cheap macaroni and vermicelli. Cork cuttings and scraps are eagerly sought for stuffing and for buoyant purposes. Pea-shells are used as a food for milch cows, and spirit may be distilled from them. Sawdust is now applied in a prodigious number of ways, for making paper, distilling oxalic acid, smoking fish, clearing jewellery, filling scent-bags, stuffing dolls, &c. Tobacco-ashes are made into tooth-powder. The coal-tar from gas-works is made to yield sulphate of ammonia, sal-ammoniac, printers' ink, lampblack, disinfectants, naphtha, benzole, paraffin, and the magnificent series of aniline colours for dyeing and calico-printing. The sediment in wine-casks is made into cream of tartar. Old kicked-off horse-shoe nails yield the best of all iron for musket-barrels. As for the shops in which gold-workers, jewellers, and goldbeaters work, not only is the very dust on the floor precious, but a refiner will gladly give a new waistcoat or apron for an old one, for the sake of the auriferous particles thereby obtained.

Mr Simmonds's new batch comprises many instances of substances recently transferred from the domain of waste to that of utility, and many suggestions for a similar transference in other quarters.

First, for the animal kingdom. Horse-flesh is certainly not waste so long as dogs and cats eagerly feed upon it; but the French say that we ought not to leave it to the dogs and cats, by reason of the excellent qualities it possesses for human food; however, we must leave this matter to the hippophagic admirers of 'chevaline.' Fish are applied to many more useful purposes than was customary a few years ago: shark fins are prized as food by the Chinese; shark liver is boiled down by them for oil; shark skin is dried and used for polishing wood and ivory; dried shark heads are given by the Norwegians to cattle as food; smoked and dried dog-fish is eaten as food, as are also the eggs, while the skin and the liver are applied to the same purposes as those of the shark. The French procure useful medicinal oil from the liver of the skate, which used to be thrown away, but which is now found to be nearly as efficacious as cod-liver oil. A French firm, Messrs Souffrie, make large quantities of useful tallow or fat out of the pickings and waste of slaughter-houses, the dead cats and



dogs found floating in the Seine, and the used-up grease of railway wheels; when doctored by means of steam and hydraulic pressure, this fat becomes available for stearine manufacturers. Leather scraps are made into 'shoddy leather,' by grinding and macerating them into a pulp available for the inner soles of shoes and such-like purposes. There is another leathery composition much used in America under the name of 'pancake.' Thin bits of leather, the odds and ends cut off by the tanner and currier from whole hides, are interlaid with paste until they accumulate to an inch in thickness, and then heavily squeezed between two iron rollers; the mass comes out as an oblong pancake twelve inches by four, and half an inch thick, looking very much 'like a cross between a sheet of gingerbread and a cake of tobacco;' it is used for inner soles, heels, and stiffeners. The albumenised paper used by photographers is subject to much waste in its manufacture; this waste, instead of being consigned to the pulp-vat, is now converted into beautiful marbled paper, by a peculiar application of aniline colours to the albumen.

Next, as to the vegetable kingdom. We are told that the using up of what was formerly considered waste, in the textile manufactures, now reaches the enormous quantity of a hundred thousand tons annually, in the three forms of cotton, flax, and hemp waste. If we include animal fibres, such as shoddy wool and silk waste, the aggregate becomes largely increased. The French make firewood or fire-lighters of the cones of pine-trees and the waste cobs of maize, saturated with any cheap resinous substance. Messrs Souffrie (already named) buy all the waste and pickings of vegetables from the twenty-five hospitals of Paris, cook them by steam, and feed a piggery of seven hundred head of swine—the vegetables being enriched with the greasy slops from the same hospitals. The same firm also produce beautiful white fat from the black residue left after purifying colza or rape oil; and another residue from the treatment of this residue gives them a useful varnish for cheap out-door purposes. The oil retained in olive oil-cake is now extracted by chemical means, and converted into capital stearine; and by this improvement it is expected that seven million pounds of olive oil, now annually wasted at Marseille, will be utilised. Old account-books, letters, invoices, envelopes, cheques, insurance policies, and other kinds of writing paper (not printing), are now bought at about twelve pounds per ton, and worked up with other materials into pulp for the penny newspapers. Besides linen and cotton rags, cotton-waste, old writing-paper, straw, and esparto or Spanish grass, wood is also now much used for making into paper. Large factories for this purpose have been established in Italy, Wurtemberg, the United States, and other countries; the wood is rubbed down into dust by friction against rapidly revolving roughened wheels, and then treated by chemical processes until it forms a pulp suitable for paper-making. There is one wood-pulp paper-mill in Pennsylvania that can work up thirty thousand pounds of wood or of sawdust per day. Nearly all the German newspapers now have a percentage of wood in the paper on which they are printed. The *New York Daily Tribune* is said to be printed on paper made of bamboo; and other American journals are printed on paper made chiefly of a kind of wild cane that is found in vast abundance on the shores

of the Mississippi. A German chemist has found a mode of distilling spirit out of a residue left after chemically treating wood-pulp for paper. A French manufacturer converts sawdust, by intense pressure, into beautiful little boxes and other ornamental articles. The seed in the cotton pods or tufts, which used to be an annoyance to the cultivators, is now most usefully employed as a gas-fuel, as a source of oil for lamps, as a chief substitute for olive oil, as oil-cake for cattle-food, and as a source of good hard grease or stearine for soap and candles. The refuse molasses from beet-root sugar, formerly used only as pig-food, are now distilled to obtain alcohol, and the residue crystallised to obtain potassium salts. Spent dye-woods, after the colouring matter has been extracted from them, are sold in France to a large manufacturer, who mixes them with tar refuse, and forms them into compressed cakes for fuel, which has a very large sale. The acicular leaflets of the pine-tree are converted into what is called tree-wool, in France, Sweden, Holland, and other parts of the continent; this wool is used for wadding, stuffing for mattresses and other articles of furniture; a cloth made from its fibres is used for inner vests, drawers, hose, shirts, coverlets, and chest-preservers; the membranous fragments and refuse are compressed into blocks for fuel; the resinous matter contained in them is distilled for gas; while by various modes of treatment there are produced an essential oil for rheumatism and skin diseases, an ethereal oil useful as a curative agent and as a solvent, and a liquid for a medicated bath—all useful substances from a material which not long ago was utterly disregarded.

And now for the mineral kingdom. Mr Mill and other thoughtful men are cautioning us that, as our stock of coal cannot last for ever, we should do well to utilise the thirty million tons of small-coal and dust which is allowed to go nearly to waste annually at the pit's mouth; and attention is drawn to what Belgium is doing in this matter. Near Charleroi, eight hundred thousand tons of coal-dust had accumulated, a burden to the colliery owners, and an injury to the health of the workpeople. Whereupon a Company was formed expressly to utilise this refuse. The coal-dust is sifted, mixed with eight per cent. of coal-tar, heated to a paste by steam at a temperature of three hundred degrees, and pressed into blocks and cylinders about twenty pounds weight. These blocks form excellent fuel for locomotives and steamboats, productive of great heat and very little ash. In various foreign countries where paving-stone is scarce, the slag from iron-furnaces is brought into use, by being run into pits eight or nine feet in diameter, and cooled into slabs for paving. The cuttings of tin-plate, and worn-out tin kettles and saucepans, are subjected to processes which yield pure tin, good weldable iron, ammonia, Prussian-blue, and stannate of sodium; and as the make of tin-plate in England and Wales amounts to more than half a million tons annually, there must be a very large store of material available in the old tin-plate which is replaced by the new. The waste flux, such as borax, used in galvanising metals, finds a ready market among refiners and for making paint.

But there are mounds of things still waiting to be utilised, waiting for the day when some clear practical minds will find out what to do with them.



The Cleveland iron sells for a comparatively low price in the market, because it is contaminated with phosphorus. Now, the iron would be worth seven shillings per ton additional if the phosphorus were out of it, while phosphorus itself is worth sixty or seventy pounds per ton; what would not be the national gain if the two could be easily and cheaply separated! Nearly a hundred thousand tons of sulphur a year are wasted in our alkali manufactures; means have been discovered for recovering this sulphur, but the system has not yet been sufficiently adopted to prevent the sad waste of a vast quantity of spent liquor in which the sulphur exists. Cinders from refineries and puddling-furnaces, and scale from rollers and hammers, contain from thirty to fifty per cent. of good iron; it is known that the metal can be obtained from them, and converted into good iron and steel; and iron-masters are now waiting anxiously for chemists to shew how such extraction can be managed cheaply. Mr Frank Buckland has pointed out that we destroy millions of wholesome fish every year, by poisoning the waters of the Tees, the Wear, and the Dovy with lead refuse, the Dee with petroleum refuse, the Usk with sulphuric acid refuse, the Camel and the Fowey with mud from the Cornish clay-works, the Exe with chloride of lime from the paper-mills, and many of the rivers of the northern counties with waste from the chemical works. As to substances useful for food, there can be no doubt that enormous waste occurs. We will conclude with a few observations by Mr Warriner (teacher of cookery to the army) concerning this important subject: 'The refuse grease and kitchen stuff in Paris is utilised to a great extent; but in London, there is an immense amount of waste. I have been studying this subject for the last three years, and can therefore speak with confidence upon it. I am quite sure that as much material is wasted as would feed *one million pigs*. There are sanitary laws telling people to burn their potato-peelings and cabbage-leaves, simply because we lack municipal regulations which would provide for the removal of these things every day. To shew the loss which is thus sustained, I may mention that at Aldershot each regiment of about five hundred men get about four pounds per month for their refuse of this description. I calculate that from every family of twelve individuals, living at the rate of three hundred a year, there is enough refuse to keep two pigs.'

## A LIMITED HORIZON.

IN FIFTEEN CHAPTERS.

### CHAPTER XIII.—A SECRET DISHONOUR.

'My dear Miss Lalagé,' the unwise curate had written, 'I don't know how to begin this letter, for I am afraid what I am going to tell you will make you very angry; but I couldn't help it. You yourself told me there was no hope for me as regards the subject on which I spoke to you some time ago. I now write to say that my feelings are changed—at least, I don't know that they are really changed, for never in all my life shall I think any woman half so sweet and beautiful as you are; but at any rate I must try and keep down all that, for I am engaged, or as good as engaged, to a lady to whom I stood in the same position some time ago;

but she and every one else went out of my head when I saw you.

'She gave me up four years ago; but has been good enough to reconsider her verdict: so she has given me to understand; but I cannot make up my mind to take the final step without writing to tell you. Don't be angry with me. I have been very unhappy, and am now, as I believe, only doing what is best; and you know you said there was no hope.

'Mary is very good—too good for me, I feel—and she does not know I have ever cared for any one but her; she fancied so once, and that made her break off the engagement; but now she thinks it was all a mistake, and I have not the heart to undeceive her: she would be so unhappy, and is so good, and has had so much trouble all her life. Do be kind enough to write and tell me you are not angry; and may I ask you to direct your letter to the post-office here?

'My substitute has promised to let me have another fortnight at home, so I shall be here till the middle of July.—I am always, dear Miss Lalagé, yours faithfully,  
T. MITCHELL.'

The bright summer morning that brought this letter to Lalagé found her in the garden with little Isabel Cleather. She was in quite high spirits, holding the child in her arms, and running with her to look for the postman. It was a daily excitement of which Dinner Bell was very fond; Lalagé was more careless about it, having few correspondents.

At last the man came up in his leisurely country fashion, and delivered two letters: one, a big blue envelope, directed to Belle, Lalagé gave the child to take to her sister; the other, she put quickly into her pocket with a faint angry flush. With amazed eyes she had recognised the big curate's small hand, and a dark presentiment of evil came over her. What business had he to write to her?

With all her gaiety dashed to the ground, she went back to the house, and looking in at the drawing-room door, asked Belle if she would take charge of Dinner Bell for the morning.

She went up to her own room; with slow, unwilling fingers opened the unlucky letter, and read it through once, twice, three times, her quick, faint flush coming and going over her face all the while. Then she crushed up the envelope in her angry fingers, and flung herself on her knees by the bed—not to pray, only to keep down with hidden face and stifled sobs the passion she felt she must suppress.

She was very angry, very angry indeed. That she, Lalagé Hesketh, should have received such a letter from any man, was a humiliation, an insult. And what should she do? How should she resent it? Where should she turn for help? She had hitherto been protected, guarded, defended from the outer world; but this bitter arrow reached her standing alone and helpless on the terrible hill of isolation on which she had placed herself, and there was none to draw it out, and prevent the poisonous wound from festering. Her first impulse was to rush down and tell her sister everything; but this was instantly rejected. She could not bring herself to do it. 'Belle would only despise me,' she thought, in her blind misunderstanding of superior wisdom; and self-scorn was easier to bear than the scorn of that other, dearer one.

And this was not a thing to be prayed about—an insult which, she said to herself, had been brought about by herself; it could not be well to lay such a petty humiliation before the awful throne on high. No, there was no comfort anywhere. But a sudden divine impulse came over her, and she stretched out her hands, poor Lalagé, and sobbed out: 'Make haste to help me, O Lord!'

A little softened, she got up, and smoothed out the envelope and replaced the letter; then put on her things hastily, and went out. Up the hot hill-side, Belle saw the light figure moving swiftly on, goaded by the inner pain, and followed her with fond wishes and tender fears.

'She shall not stay here much longer,' said Belle to herself; 'Grimswold is too dull for her.'

All through the burden and heat of the long summer day, Lalagé wandered with quick unconscious steps, seeking rest and finding none, repeating to herself that she had been insulted, and bearing about her the curate's written testimony of his own instability and unworthiness. At four in the afternoon, she found herself back in the little wood, through which she had passed in the morning. She did not yet feel tired out, and was still very angry; but she sat down at the foot of an old brown trunked tree, and leaning her head against it, looked like a white withering flower in the gloomy shade of the wood. Near that very spot, only eight months before, she had heard the curate's steps as he came up to her on the day when he made an appeal which had touched her very heart. Nothing touched her now but a sense of outrage and insult, which made the brightness of the day, the beauty of the trees, the songs of the birds, a mockery and a bitterness. So only had the fair summer landscape spoken to her on that day when the smallest ray of comfort would have been a godsend. The beauty and brightness had thrown her back upon the heart in which was neither, only blackness and anger.

She heard footsteps approaching, but did not open her eyes to see who caused them, telling herself she was out of the way of any passer-by. But they paused when they reached her, so she turned and looked up. In her highly strung, unnatural state of excitement, it would not have seemed strange if the curate himself had stood beside her, so it was with no expression of surprise that her eyes met those of her cousin, George Wriothesley.

'Lalagé!' he cried, startled out of his usual nonchalance by her strange, ghastly appearance. 'What is the matter?'

In the shadow of the trees, with the marks of the day's heat and weariness upon her pallid face, she looked more like a fading white lily than the bright, assured girl who had been his old love.

To her, the sympathising human voice, breaking for the first time the silence of many hours, came with a comfort and appeal that she was not strong enough to resist. She looked up at him, standing there in his cool, carefully arranged summer dress, with his regular features, and long fair whiskers and moustache, and compared herself, suddenly worn and weary, and faded and bedraggled, with the well-appointed figure before her. But even that disparaging contrast could not repel the flood of pain within her which strove for utterance, and which had been invited to confidence.

'George,' she said with a sudden burst of tears, 'I have been insulted.'

There—it was over; the words had been said, the confidence had been given beyond recall, and she was glad of it. Some one stronger than herself was near to guide and help her, some one whom she knew to be good with the best goodness; her sudden prayer had already been answered.

'Insulted, Lalagé?' he said; 'who has dared?'—She interrupted him.

'O George, it was all my fault. But you had better read the letter.'

She took it out and gave it to him, crumpled and worn like herself. He read it through, and then returned it in silence.

After a pause, he said: 'The fellow hopes you won't be angry, and you tell me it was all your fault. Am I to understand that you liked this man?'

'Of course I liked him,' said Lalagé with bitter self-scorn. 'I suppose I was what people call in love with him; I used to walk with him, and talk with him, and I liked him very much.' Her manner suddenly changed, and she looked at him with eyes which grew questioning and wistful. 'Don't you think I must have liked him very much if I did all that?'

He was startled, confounded. Was Lalagé, his ideal woman, wanting in all delicacy—in all feminine reticence? Abashed, he turned away his face. In that pause, she was having hard measure dealt out to her. He felt that, man as he was, he could never have so openly spoken of his feelings on a subject of this sort. At last, he said slowly: 'I suppose if you chose him out as your companion from all the world, you must have liked him very much indeed.'

'Chose him out from all the world!' she said, with wide-opened eyes. 'There is no world here; there was no one but him to speak to, not one human being, except a wicked woman whom I detest, and I was so lonely! I know I was very wrong; I am not excusing myself; I know I ought to have stopped him more firmly the very first time he spoke so foolishly; but I can only say the old thing over again—I was so lonely, so lonely!'

He was silent, not well knowing what to say. She looked up.

'George,' she said, 'you do not understand; you do not see that the insult lies in his having written to me on what he calls "that subject." I had desired him never to allude to it again; I had told him I would appeal to papa if he did, he made me so angry with his foolishness. I had forbidden him to speak to me at all, and then he goes away and takes advantage of the post to make me read words to which I would never have listened; telling me—"with a throb of wounded vanity"—he must give me up! Give up what he never had!'

'But if you liked him so much,' said George, 'why was all this so distasteful to you?'

'Because I knew him to be unworthy,' she said: 'he had broken his word before, speaking when he had promised to be silent; and though in liking him I had fallen very low, there was no reason for falling lower by encouraging him.'

'Does he know you liked him so much?'

'Of course not!' said Lalagé, getting up and standing before him in a blaze of passion. 'What do you take me for? Oh, I wish I had never

told you ; you don't understand ; and you don't care, you don't care !'

She was stung and angry. The unworthy man, who, as she thought, would have been faithful to his hapless love all his life, had turned from her, and written to tell her that her regard was no longer a thing to be desired ; the worthy man, to whom in her need she had looked for help, stood aloof coldly, only seeming shocked and bewildered. Ah ! he had a right to be shocked—she herself was shocked, thinking of the position in which she stood. But why should he be bewildered, and helpless, and stupid ? However, her last words roused him.

'Lalagé,' he said—and she was forced to acknowledge to herself that his voice was earnest and kind—'I do care very much ; so much, that I do not know how to help you, or what to say, till I have thought it over. But that I will help you I give you my word. I will write to the man myself, as soon as I see my way clearly. Will you give me this evening to think it all out ?'

'Yes,' she said, as one who did not much care, for all at once she became exhausted ; the active exercise and the long fast were telling upon her.

'Now, we must get home as soon as possible,' he said gently : 'you are quite overdone.'

They walked through the wood and down the hill, he all the while accommodating his steps to her feeble ones, as that other man had certainly never done. When they were about half-way home, he made her stop and rest for a minute or two, mounting guard over her jealously, and looking to the right and left, not knowing, as she did, how very rare were passers-by. He was kind—yes ; but somehow she felt as though she were a prisoner under humiliating circumstances. Slow tears, which she was too weak to resist, came to her eyes, and through them she saw her cousin move away with his foot a black impeding log which was fretting the course of a fair little brook.

At last home was reached. George told Belle he had found Lalagé quite tired out, and advised her going to bed early ; so, soon after dinner, she got away to her room. She had meant to think it all over, and come to some conclusion as to the answer to that fatal letter ; but she was so tired that her head had scarcely touched her pillow before she fell asleep.

Down-stairs, Belle and George spent a very quiet evening ; he was silent and preoccupied, and very early returned to the homely old-fashioned little inn in which he had taken up his quarters. Going through the streets on his way thither, he could not help noticing the utter desolation of the place. 'She must have been very lonely,' he said.

Late into the summer night he sat in the tiny inn parlour, smoking a contemplative cigar, and gazing out into the summer darkness, not in the least looking hurt and wounded, as he really was. Yet Lalagé had disappointed him sorely that day, and, besides, an unacknowledged hope had been stifled ere it rose to life.

The whole affair which he had promised to think over was very vague, but he was resolved to help her—help her he would. A dull anger burned in his heart against the foolish weak man who had written that letter, and who was, he found out from Belle, the curate of Grimswold. But he was the man whom Lalagé had liked very much, so he must not be too hard upon him. And yet she had

never pleaded for any such leniency ; she had only been angry, and outraged, and insulted, and had always spoken of it in the past tense, never in the present. Was that all the love of which she was capable ? he asked himself with a sigh. Love which could be destroyed at a single blow—how-ever deadly that blow might be—was to him a mystery.

No flush had risen to her pale face when she had uttered that scornful, self-condemning sentence ; no tender reticence had made the words falter on her lips. Then he remembered the questioning eyes that had met his when she had startled him with the query : 'Don't you think I must have liked him very much if I did all that ?' Her face, her attitude, as she had said those words, came back to him, and suddenly it seemed as though a child, whose heedless feet had carried her where she would not, and who wept over her wanderings with bitter, undue lamentations, had stood before him then, asking that strange question, instead of a conscious woman, who was incapable of reticence or delicacy.

\* A sudden revelation laid bare the truth before his delighted eyes, and, taking the end of his cigar from his mouth, he flung the red-hot spark far into the landlord's peaceful kitchen-garden, where it lay for a few seconds before it went out, hissing and seething on the top of a bedewed cabbage.

'By Jove !' said George Wriothesley, 'it is all a mistake ; she doesn't like him in that way, poor innocent child, and she doesn't know the difference. And she must have been very lonely, very lonely indeed ; poor little Lalagé, poor little child ;' and the 'Thank Heaven !' which he uttered in his brief, soldierly fashion, was no mere exclamation.

Then, to make up for all the hard thoughts he had bestowed on her, he gave himself up to the recounting of her various good qualities—not a difficult task, and one on which he had been engaged at intervals ever since she had really been the 'little child' he was now calling her.

It was a strange mistake for a woman to make ; but then she was hardly a woman in mind yet, he said to himself, and had been placed in a very trying position ; utterly without friends or acquaintances, she who had been all her life accustomed to society. He rejoiced over his discovery with a great joy.

'The truth shall make you free,' kept running in his head betwixt pitiful mental glimpses of her whom he had wronged in thought ; yes, the truth should make Lalagé Hesketh free, and no selfish joy marred the beauty of his exultation.

Before he went to bed he wrote a short, stern letter to the curate, to be copied and sent, or destroyed and not sent, just as Lalagé liked.

'Sir,' it ran, 'surprised I was at the letter received from you on the —th instant. I have no comment to make on the contents, which in no way concern me, but beg that no repetition of the offence be committed, or I shall feel obliged to take more severe methods of enforcing your silence.—With every wish for your future welfare, I remain, &c.'

This epistle concluded and approved, he went to bed, feeling happier than he could have believed possible eight hours before.

'Poor little Lalagé, poor little child,' was his last thought ; in her weakness and helplessness, she seemed dearer than ever to him.



## CHAPTER XIV.—SET FREE.

And how had George Wriothesley found himself in Grimswood just at this particular juncture of Lalagé's life? She asked herself this question next morning, thinking, with a little shame, that she had never made any inquiries on the subject on the previous day. It had not seemed strange to her to find him standing by her side in the wood; but looking back, after the pause and calm which sleep had brought to her excitement, it did appear very odd.

She grew more and more ashamed, as she remembered how suddenly and abruptly she had forced her troubles upon him, and marvelled at his having been so ready to receive her confidence. How long ago it seemed! Was it indeed only a day, a single day since she had received the curate's letter? Both in body and mind she felt as if the wear and tear of weeks had gone over her head. And how strange it was, that just when he was so much wanted, her cousin should have come to her aid! How had it all come about?

To answer this question, we must go back for a while, and shall then be able to tell the reader more than George confessed to Lalagé in reply to her subsequent queries. He had answered Gertrude Cleather's letter immediately on its receipt, and appointed a suburb of London which would be easily accessible to him, to which he begged her, if possible, to repair at once. Thither he had gone to see her, accompanied by an attendant from a lunatic asylum, dressed as his groom. He and this man went and returned from the Cleathers' house several times, so that the captain grew accustomed to the supposed servant, without suspicion of any sort. Happily, too, all memory of the insulting way in which he had treated George last time they met had faded from his failing mind; so the two were on moderately friendly terms, though Captain Cleather confided to Gertrude that he hated men about him—any one of them might be an infernal doctor, for anything one knew—for they, doctors, were equal to any mean subterfuge or disguise. But Gertrude reassured him, giving him her word of honour that neither George nor his groom was a medical man; and he believed in her more than in any one else.

After a few weeks had elapsed, George begged to be allowed to leave the man at the Cleathers, whilst he took an imaginary journey.

'These fellows are always in the way when one is travelling, Cleather,' he said; 'and I don't want to dismiss him, he's such a good servant.'

'I don't mind keeping him,' growled the captain, 'if he'll only make himself useful.'

'That I'm sure he will,' said George, and went his way, leaving the man behind him.

Either this man's presence exercised a beneficial restraint over Captain Cleather, or he 'managed' him without the patient's cognizance; for certain it is that Gertrude's husband was quieter and more reasonable than he had been for many months. He constituted himself Captain Cleather's body-servant, and soon the poor irritable man could not do without him.

Once, indeed, he could do nothing right in his master's eyes, and storms of rage burst upon his head. Such high words were spoken, and such terrible threats uttered, that Gertrude, in alarm, wrote for George, who answered her summons

instantly. He was met at the door by the infuriated captain.

'You've come back, have you?' cried the angry man. 'It's quite time, I can tell you. That man of yours is downright insolent; you'd better take him away.'

'I wish you'd let me have a few words with you,' said George; and Captain Cleather, gratified by the confidence implied, willingly assented.

'The truth is,' said George, as the two paced up and down the small garden-walk, 'the man is insolent—an overbearing fellow, almost too much for me to manage. I wish you'd take him in hand for a year or so, and keep a sharp look-out upon him; it would do him all the good in the world, for he's too good a servant to be got rid of.'

'Why don't you do it yourself?' asked the suspicious man, but in a calmer tone.

'I'm such an awfully soft fellow,' said George with a laugh; 'besides, you are more fit for the work than I am; higher up in the service, and all that.'

'But I never was in the Guards,' said the pacified captain.—'Well, I'll see about it: he wants a tight hand over him.'

This new view of the subject afforded him much gratification, and, to Gertrude's surprise, he proposed that evening that the man should take up his quarters for the night in the dressing-room adjoining his own room. This had actually been the case ever since the keeper's arrival, but without Captain Cleather's knowledge; so Gertrude's path was now comparatively smooth.

Only comparatively, however, for she knew that her husband was not radically better—never could be radically better—and the future lay before her, black with horror and pain. Into its gloomy recesses, however, she would not let her spirit dive, simply receiving each day, with its endurable trials and anxieties, from the merciful heavenly hands, which would never inflict on her more than she was able to bear.

George asked many questions about the Heskeths, whom he had not seen for a year; and Gertrude's account of Lalagé by no means satisfied him. 'She was looking very delicate,' her friend had said, and the thought haunted George.

He had now fairly established Gertrude's protector; so felt at liberty to follow his own inclinations, and pay his cousins a visit. He called on his uncle previously, and heard from the blind busy man that his daughters were both well, and Lalagé charmed with the place.

'I am thinking of running up to see them,' he had said, and Mr Hesketh had answered: 'Ah, do; hence it was that the day which had brought Lalagé the curate's letter had found George Wriothesley standing beside her in the little wood, whither he had followed her, according to Belle's directions.'

The next morning, he went over to the Hill House, and found Lalagé alone in the drawing-room. Belle, contrary to her usual habits, had gone out for a drive, taking little Dinner Bell with her. She thought something was going on between her sister and George—as indeed there was, though a different 'something' from what she imagined—and resolved not to be in the way.

Lalagé was lying on the sofa, white and exhausted, with the traces of the dead passion of the day before on her face.

'I am afraid you are very tired,' he said.

'Very tired,' she answered; 'so tired, that I can scarcely think of anything.'

'I am sorry for that,' he said, 'for there is something I want to ask you to think about. Do you know, Lalagé, I fancy you have been making a great mistake?'

'About what?' she asked, lifting her clear wistful eyes to his face.

'What an awkward business it is to talk about,' thought George to himself; 'but it must be said out somehow;' so he went on in his straightforward fashion, though his very forehead was red. 'About your feelings with regard to this man—I am very sure that you do not care about him in the way you have been imagining.'

'That is what I said to myself when that dreadful letter came,' said Lalagé eagerly. 'I said: "It is all a mistake; it is not true that I ever cared." But then I sent it away as a mean, wicked thought, shewing I was anxious to escape from all the trouble I had drawn upon myself; and, George, I think it still, for I was so sorry for him, more sorry than I have ever been for any one else.'

'That may be,' said George Wriothesley, turning away his face. 'Some men shew their feelings more than others, and find it easy to enlist ladies' sympathy in that way; others can't. But, Lalagé, that has nothing to do with it; the real thing goes deeper than the deepest pity, and has nothing to do with anger, and yesterday you were angry.'

'Very angry,' she said.

'You could not have been angry if *that* had been the case,' he went on; 'only hurt, and sorrowful, and wounded.—You see, with a forced laugh, 'I know all about it, and you don't, and that was why you made the mistake.'

'If it only were so,' said Lalagé with tears, burying her face in her pillows. 'But I don't deserve to escape in this way, and I am not sure you are right.'

'Indeed, I am right,' he said earnestly: 'your very saying that proves it. If I were wrong, you would not wish to escape, thinking those chains dearer than liberty.'

'But oh, I am so ashamed!' she said with a sudden cry. 'If a mistake, it is such a dreadful mistake for a woman to have made.'

'I daresay lots of women have made it before,' said George sententiously; 'only they have kept it to themselves, instead of acknowledging it, as you have done.'

'I wish I had kept it to myself,' she sobbed.

'Don't say that,' he said gently, though he could not help liking her the better for the sentiment. 'It has been such a happiness to me to help you to a knowledge of the truth; besides, if you had gone on thinking you had that fancied pain, it would have been so hard upon you—nearly as hard as a real sorrow, I think.'

'Her distress touched him, but not to the extent to which it would have softened the curate, for he was a just man, and could not help feeling that it was only natural, and even deserved. She felt that he was judging her righteously—not passing over her weakness, as though it were utterly guiltless, but still pitiful and kind; and this made her trust to him, and give his opinion due value.'

Presently she said: 'I hope it is as you think, but I don't deserve it.'

'I am sure I am right,' he said heartily; 'and as for not deserving the freedom, poor little Lalagé,

you have not been very wise; but no one can say worse of you than that; and few women have been placed in so trying a position.'

She, a tall, slender girl, considerably overtopping the average height to which women attain, had perhaps never been called 'little' before; and somehow the epithet, acknowledging her weakness and unwisdom, did not displease her: it was true she did feel very little just then.

'I was very lonely, George,' she said.

'I am sure of it,' he answered; 'and you felt it so much that it was pleasant to have any one to speak to: isn't it so?'

'Yes,' she said; 'and he was a clergyman, and really is so good.'

'I don't know about that,' said George illiberally.

'Yes, he is,' said Lalagé; 'only weak and foolish: he is very good to the poor.'

'Then he should confine his attentions to them,' said George loftily.—'By the way, Lalagé, will this letter do?' And he drew the document from his pocket.

She read it over, and then said, almost with a laugh: 'O no. I will write to him in a day or two, and you will see that my letter will answer the purpose better than this, which would frighten him nearly out of his senses.'

'Well, just as you like,' he said, more careless about the curate now that Lalagé had been brought to look upon her freedom as a possible fact; and then both left the unwelcome topic, and talked about George's coming to Grimswood, and other indifferent subjects.

'O George, isn't it a lonely place?' she exclaimed. She could not help saying the words over and over again; it was so pleasant that that which had caused her so much suffering should be acknowledged as an evil.

'Very lonely,' he said. 'But did you never try to give yourself some special home-task—work, or something? What do women always do?'

'Needlework,' said Lalagé; 'and I hate it. And they read; but I am not clever, and don't care for reading more than two or three hours a day, and every day is fourteen hours long, you know. But I am trying to be better,' she added with earnest humility. 'Ever since Dinner Bell has been here, I have done every single thing for her: mended her clothes, put her to bed, dressed her in the morning, taken her to walk. It has been such a pleasure.—And besides, I must shew you something,' she said, jumping off the sofa, and opening a chiffonier drawer. 'I made all these myself; and she displayed five or six little blue print pinafores, over which she had painfully laboured for as many weeks: 'these are for my district.'

'I think you have been very good,' he said, examining the work minutely, as if he knew anything about it.

'But I only did all this quite lately,' she said. 'At first, I did nothing all day, when I could not go out, but sit at the window and watch the rain, and feel so wretched and lonely; and then that horrible business came on. O George, I wonder why it all happened: it did no good, and is such a humiliation.'

'Little Lalagé,' he said, 'perhaps you needed humiliation.'

'I hope it will make me better,' she said softly.

Then Belle came in, and had to be told all about George's adventures in Grimswood; and they all

talked and laughed in a way to which two of them were hardly accustomed, till it was time to take little Dinner Bell up for her noonday sleep.

'Lalagé is not looking well,' said George to Belle.

'Not at all,' was the answer: 'I am anxious to get her away for a little change.'

'I don't suppose you will be here much longer?' asked George. 'I should think my uncle had economised enough to set him up for life.'

'I don't know about that,' said Belle; 'but papa's affairs are much more favourable than he at first supposed, and Lalagé, poor child, has spent next to nothing on dress.'

'She has had no temptation to do otherwise, I suppose,' said George; 'and you are just as blue as ever, Belle.'

'Just as blue,' she said with her rare sweet smile; 'only I hope my petticoats are long enough to hide my stockings, as somebody says.'

'I think they are very pretty stockings,' said George affectionately.

He was very fond of Belle, and she quite reciprocated the feeling. Women older than himself generally liked George Wriothesley, being able to give him his due value; those of his own age, or still younger, did not appreciate him. He was perhaps a little dogmatic, and almost obstinate in his freely spoken opinions; and to girls in all the one-sidedness and illiberality of youth, this just, righteous man seemed only cold and hard.

In general society, he did not shine, being one of those people who require a wide margin of their own, so as to do justice to themselves, and give their peculiar characteristics due value. Iron cannot float; no more could George Wriothesley adapt himself to the froth and foam of society, as women—even though they be the best and wisest—so easily do; consequently, he was only silent and *nonchalant*, or, when he spoke, seemed cynical and disapproving. All this had tended to make Lalagé, bright and brilliant as she was, rather dislike him than otherwise, though she respected him to what she called a terrible extent; but in her trouble she found the qualities of which she had thought so little the very ones which helped and comforted her. He was just and truthful, so she could safely trust her cause in his hands, and with trembling joy accepted the verdict he had pronounced, for her own heart told her it was a true one.

She was free; at her own expense to be sure—for she had made a mistake of which it was a humiliation even to think—but still, that greater trouble, that deeper humiliation was spared her, and she was grateful to the cousin who had shewn her a truth to which she would scarcely have dared to open her own eyes.

In that brief visit—he was only with them ten days—she learned to know and like him as she had never done before; he was very kind, listening with keen interest to all the petty details of her uneventful life, and admiring the surrounding landscape with such artistic appreciation, that they had new charms for the girl, who had looked on them so often and wearily that she had forgotten they were beautiful. And in those brighter days, the curate's letter was answered. It ran as follows:

'Sir—With much surprise I received your letter of the —th instant, and you must forgive my

saying that it was not an honourable letter. You, who were, as you say, "as good as engaged," should never have written such, as it was quite unfit for the eyes of the lady to whom you are betrothed. However, I at once beg to assure you that its contents shall never come to her knowledge; and I sincerely hope both she and you may be very happy. That your feelings in regard to that other subject—on which, if you remember, I had forbidden you to speak—are changed, can be only matter of rejoicing to me; and yet, at first, your writing to acquaint me of the fact seemed so unjustifiable an intrusion that I was very angry. However, you are now fully forgiven; and with every wish for your welfare, I remain, faithfully yours,  
LALAGÉ HESKETH.'

When this letter was fairly despatched, Lalagé felt more light-hearted than she had yet done; but soon after an event occurred which again shadowed her horizon.

One bright July day, whilst the small party at the Hill House was seated at luncheon, a boy came leisurely up the drive, where the broad shield ferns were standing bolt upright in the sun, and the glowing peonies were drooping their heavy heads; coming up to the door, he handed in an envelope, and asked for sixpence. The telegram—for it was nothing less—was directed to George, who opened it quickly, his thoughts flying to Gertrude. It was from her, and ran: 'Come to me at once; my husband is very ill; bring Dinner Bell with you.'

This missive spread consternation all round.

'Poor Gertrude,' said George; and the two women were eager in their inquiries as to whether either or both had not better accompany him.

'I think not,' he said decidedly: 'it is a peculiar case; but I will write immediately, and tell you if you are wanted.'

There was just time to catch the two o'clock train; so he went to the *Raven* to make his few preparations, whilst Lalagé got the child ready. Great tears fell on her hair as she brushed and smoothed it for the last time. 'I shall miss you so, Dinner Bell,' she said.

'Dear Laladée,' said the child, flinging her arms round the girl's neck.

'We must make haste, Dinner Bell,' said Lalagé, disengaging the soft hindering hands; 'poor papa is so ill, you know.'

'Yes,' said the child; 'and he will be swarring and swarring—he always does when his head is bad.'

When Dinner Bell was ready, Lalagé took her down-stairs, and found her cousin George alone in the dining-room; the child ran out to see if the pony-carriage was coming, and he went up to Lalagé at once.

'Lalagé,' he said, 'there is something I want to say before I go. Do you remember something I asked you on the 5th of December, year before last?'

'I do not remember the date,' she said, flushing; 'but I know what you mean.'

'Is there any change in your feelings?' he asked. 'Will you try to think more kindly of me than you did then?'

'George, how can you ask it?' said the girl, turning away her head; 'it is not like you. I am only just getting free from a dreadful mistake;



how can you expect me to be able to think of anything else? I have been weak and foolish enough to justify your asking this, but indeed I am not weak and foolish enough to be able to turn round so quickly.' Her voice shewed that she was pained.

'You are right,' he said: 'I have made a mistake.' Then an awkward five minutes followed, broken at last, to the infinite relief of both, by the arrival of the pony-carriage.

'Good-bye,' said Lalagé, holding out her hand. 'Thank you for being so kind.'

Bitter thanks they were to him; and all the way down to the station, he upbraided himself with his stupidity for that inappropriate appeal, which had burst from a man who was not wont to act upon impulse. 'I shall never win her,' he said with a sigh. And Dinner Bell, by his side, prattled of the father whom she expected to find with his head 'very bad.'

But the poor captain was not 'swarring and swarming,' and would never more offend with his lips. Late that night, when George reached Eastbourne—whence the telegram had been dated—he found his old friend lying white and speechless in a living death. The eyes, more sane and quiet than they had been for very long, wandered about with a pathetic wistfulness, but further power of expression there was none. Paralysis had laid its iron bands upon him, and he was never more to be released till Death, the healer, had touched him. By that awful bed, whereon was stretched, in such dire extremity, her first, last, only love, Gertrude Cleather watched—calm, gentle, ministering as of old. To her, this death in life seemed but the step to another, larger existence, where God, the recompenser, would make good to the poor captain all that had been wanting in this world. The wistful eyes grew more contented when they rested upon her, and a glimmer of intelligence seemed to come into them when she spoke of that calm fair heaven whither he was preceding her.

'I shall try to come to you, John,' she said, 'and I believe I shall.'

For him, of course, there was no doubt, only for her to whom remained further trials and a greater length of journey.

There was little to tell George. The poor bewrayed captain had, a fortnight before, wandered again to the sea, drawn thither by the irresistible attraction which the mighty ocean—yet more restless and unquiet than himself—always had for him, and there he had been 'very good,' as Gertrude said. There had been one slight outbreak the day before, and he had gone out for a long, hot drive; shortly after his return home he had been struck down by the foe who was yet waiting to give his final blow.

It was not long in coming: in the gray, early morning, when the first chill rays of the sun fell upon his dying bed, the spirit of Gertrude Cleather's husband passed away, to be 'made perfect' by One who, when on earth, healed them that were lunatic and sore distressed.

George wrote to give Lalagé the last news of Captain Cleather. 'I think,' he added, 'after a while, Gertrude would be glad if you would come to her; so hold yourself in readiness for a summons. I know you will do all you can to comfort her.'

'So that was the secret of her life,' sobbed Lalagé, as she read to Belle the letter which had revealed so much. 'Poor Gertrude, poor Gertrude!'

CHAPTER XV.—THE LAST.

Belle and Lalagé were once more left alone in the Hill House. On the evening of George Wriothesley's departure they were sitting as usual in the drawing-room, when Belle said abruptly: 'Have you nothing to tell me, Lalagé?'

'O Belle,' cried the girl, 'I will tell you everything.' She went and sat on a footstool at her sister's feet, and poured out a confession very different from the one her auditor expected. All the pitiable story, with its weakness, its foolishness, its pain, was told, interrupted by sobs, and tears, and vivid blushes. 'I am so ashamed to have made such a mistake,' said Lalagé, lifting up repentant dewy eyes.

'My darling,' said Belle, whose eyes were likewise wet, 'I cannot bear to think you should have been in all that trouble whilst I knew nothing of it.'

'You are not vexed that I did not tell you before, are you?' asked Lalagé. 'O Belle, I could not, whilst it was all going on; and till I found George so kind, I thought you would despise me; but after his goodness, I knew you would be only more good, more kind, just as you are dearer and better than any one else.'

'I do not blame you, dear,' her sister answered; 'I know how hard it is at times to give confidence; besides, young people are so reticent about their troubles.'

'I am so thankful it is all over,' said Lalagé with a deep breath.

Yes, it was all over—the secrecy, the torment, the self-reviling; but the poor foolish little heart had learned a lesson which it never forgot in all its after-life. People used to say she had lost her high spirits, but Lalagé would laugh, and say it was only the shadow of the Cotswold Hills still hanging over her.

But to return. The loss of little Dinner Bell made a great blank in Lalagé's life, but she was resolved not to let it run into a waste of idleness, as she had before done; she went on diligently with those painful little pinafores, and laborious little dresses for her district; and even that dry, uninteresting work brought its reward. She was no longer wretched, and lonely, and *ennuyée*; the thousand pricks which her awkward fingers inflicted upon themselves with her unmanageable needle were the sharpest sorrows she had then. But still she felt that hers was not a very happy life, so many capabilities being unemployed, and she longed for the time when Gertrude would send for her. The ardent, sympathetic heart longed to comfort and help the woman who had been left alone in the world at so early an age. Belle had proposed that they should leave Grimswoold at once, but Lalagé had earnestly entreated that they might not do so. 'I cannot even seem to run away from the curate,' she had said.

The first meeting with him she rather dreaded, but it passed off without awkwardness, for the moment she saw the unwise, embarrassed man, her own courage returned to her. 'I am glad to see you back again,' she said, 'for I am daily expecting a summons from Grimswoold, and cannot bear to leave my district unbefriended; you will look after it, I know.'

And the big foolish man stammered, and grew red, and promised fifty things, and went back to

his house again bedazzled and made miserable by that sweet, pure face in all its beauty of forgiveness.

This meeting took place out of doors, for never again did the curate enter the Hill House, never again walk and talk with Lalagé as he had been wont to do; she brought about this change of course, but it gave her pain; she knew that Mrs Verey would notice it, and say bitter, cruel things of her; but she accepted it all humbly. 'I have deserved it,' she said; 'I am glad to be punished for it;' and soon she had ample foundation for her fears.

'So t' parson be going to marry,' said an old district woman to her. 'I do hear tell as he hasn't just done right by you—threw you over, like.'

'Indeed, he has done nothing of the sort,' said Lalagé earnestly; 'you must not think such a wicked thing of him.' And disregarding her own pain, she tried to soothe the old woman, and convince her of the untruth of the report. But it was useless; with the pertinacity of old age, she clung to the idea.

'Mrs Verey, she says "Just what I thought;" but I don't call that proper on her, for t' parson be a good parson, and I thowt you and he would have got on well together—ah, dear, ah, dear.'

'So we shall get on well together as friends,' said the poor girl.

'Friends!' repeated the old woman scornfully. 'You won't settle down and live along o' t' parson because you and he be friends; you'll be making off and leaving we poor folk just when you'n got tired on us.'

The 'making off and leaving them' was so near at hand that Lalagé had not the courage to acknowledge it. She went out of the cottage feeling sick at heart. She had been kept from the slander of the world all her life, and now—though Grimswold consisted of scarcely more than a handful of cottages—it was dreadful to think that her name was being carried from mouth to mouth as that of an injured woman, and to feel very sure that the curate was not spared any comments, most likely hearing all she herself had been told. 'Never mind,' she said to herself that night as it all crowded upon her; 'I don't deserve to be helped; but I believe something will come to my aid.'

And the very next morning proved she was right, for she received a letter from Gertrude Cleather, begging her to come and stay with her for a long time. Lalagé went; and as she and Belle drove down to the station next day, she looked out over the peaceful landscape with eyes which, though full of a painful recollection, did not know they were gazing on it for the last time.

Nothing could have done the girl who had so lately been absorbed in her own troubles more good than a visit to one so heavily afflicted as was Gertrude Cleather. Her own foolish griefs seemed so small by that great sorrow, that she soon learned to give them their due estimate, and all her ardent sympathy and unselfish love were exercised to lighten her friend's sufferings.

She was very sweet to all who were in trouble, poor Lalagé, who thought herself so useless; and Gertrude mentally thanked George Wriothesley twenty times a day for the suggestion of sending for one who proved so great a comfort. The two women would sit together talking for hours of the poor dead captain, Lalagé's quick intuition making her understand the hundred perils through which her friend had passed.

'But I was with him to the last, just as I hoped and prayed,' said Gertrude.

To the children, Lalagé was a source of great delight, her patience and goodness to them being inexhaustible. Little Isabel grew fonder than ever of her. 'I wish you could give me the child,' she said to Gertrude one day.

'I wish you could live with me always,' replied her friend.

'Live with you!' said Lalagé; 'why, I must be going back to Grimswold very soon; I have been away too long already; Belle is all alone.' And she thought, with a sigh, that the dreary winter months were drawing near. But to Grimswold she never returned.

Mr Hesketh threw up his seat in parliament; he was getting an old man, he said, and anxious to be quietly settled at home with his children; that was his original excuse; but subsequently he found that travelling on the continent would be more to his satisfaction than any amount of home comforts; so he wrote to Belle and Lalagé, begging them to be ready to accompany him to Italy in the beginning of November. The sisters accordingly met in London, neither of them sorry that their Grimswold life was over.

And now I must stop writing about her, my Lalagé, with the dear violet eyes—my Lalagé, of whom I grew so fond during the few months of our acquaintance, for she is no longer bounded and confined by a Limited Horizon, but has passed into a sphere where every capability is called forth. George Wriothesley's wife is a busy as well as a happy woman, and has no time now to look back upon the girlish episode which darkened her life under the shadow of the Cotswold Hills.

#### A STORM.

The zigzag silver flashes, and the boom

With loud long rattling stuns the darkened meads;

A universal sound of rain succeeds,

And torrents running in the silent gloom;

And lo! the dreadful-threatening hand of doom

Hath spared the world; a grayer light is shed;

And unexpectedly the storm is fled,

Leaving a weight of silence in its room;

For the tense ear of all things aching waits

With dazzled eye to hear a cannonade

And crash intolerable from every part;

But nothing stirs the green expectant glade;

And now a sweet bird calls its scattered mates,

And gaily hearkens the unburdened heart.

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